

# Social capital in the change of the Czech agriculture

## *Sociální kapitál ve změně českého zemědělství*

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**Abstract:** The paper continues the debate over the nature and the role of social capital in the Czech agriculture. This issue is not marginal because social capital is also emphasized in the Czech SAPARD Plan. The paper develops the thoughts of J. Chloupková and C. Bjørnskov published in this journal in their paper “Could social capital help Czech agriculture?” (No. 6 in 2002). Differing from mentioned authors, this paper coins dual nature of understanding social capital. This understanding forms the background of the concept of social capital in the works of French sociologist P. Bourdieu. Dual concept of social capital interconnects the most often use of understanding social capital as coined by such authors like R. Putnam or J. Coleman (social capital is understood as supra-personal collective element enabling the co-ordination of activities of free individuals with equal rights thus enabling the effective operation of certain system as a collective entity) with understanding of social capital related to social status of an individual which creates the hierarchies related to power thus enabling an individual to achieve his/her goals. Using empirical data and the case study, the paper outlines the application of dual understanding of social capital in the analysis of some processes in the Czech farming. Dual concept of social capital enables to explain some circumstances, which might be in the case of one-way orientation of understanding social capital presented in rather simplified way (e.g. if and what form of social capital was weak or destroyed in the Czech agriculture and which continues to exist). This fact is documented through the case study of the changes inside large-scale farms and outside these farms (in the field of their external relations). This study documents the presence of both forms (dual concept) of social capital. Similarly, the dual concept of social capital is used in the analysis of social structure of the Czech agriculture. It is done in the comparison with the model of agriculture in European Union and in the projections into the questions of the action of actors in agriculture.

**Key word:** social capital, agriculture, social change, social structure, social action

**Abstrakt:** Článek je jedním z příspěvků do diskuse o povaze a úloze sociálního kapitálu, a to konkrétně v případě českého zemědělství. O tom, že se nejedná o nějaký okrajový jev, svědčí i důraz na záležitost spojené se sociálním kapitálem v Plánu SAPARD. Článek reaguje především na studii J. Chloupkové a C. Bjørnskov: “Could social capital help Czech agriculture?” uveřejněném v tomto časopise v čísle 6 z roku 2002. Na rozdíl od přístupů zmíněných autorů rází tento článek duální podobu chápání sociálního kapitálu, která je výrazně patrná v pojetí sociologa P. Bourdieu. Dualistický koncept vzájemně propojuje nejčastěji používané chápání sociálního kapitálu v podání R. Putnama nebo J. Colemana (vystupující jako nadosobní kolektivní element umožňující koordinaci aktivit rovnoprávných jedinců, díky čemuž je dosahováno efektivního fungování určitého systému jako celku) s chápáním sociálního kapitálu vázaného na sociální status jedince a utvářejícího tak hierarchie spojené s mocí, která jedincům umožňuje dosahovat jejich cíle. S pomocí empirických údajů a případové studie článek přibližuje možnosti aplikace dualistického chápání sociálního kapitálu pro analýzu některých procesů v českém zemědělství. Dualistický koncept sociálního kapitálu umožňuje vysvětlit některé okolnosti, které mohou být v případě jednostranného zaměření v chápání sociálního kapitálu představeny poněkud zjednodušeně (např. zda a jaká forma sociálního kapitálu u nás byla slabá či rozbita a jaká je naopak využívána stále). Tato skutečnost je ukázána na případě proměn uvnitř zemědělských podniků a v poli jejich vnějších vztahů, kde jsou přítomny obě podoby (dualistické chápání) sociálního kapitálu. Stejně tak je přiblíženo použití této dualistické koncepce sociálního kapitálu při analýze sociální struktury českého zemědělství, a to při srovnání s modelem zemědělství Evropské unie v projekci do jednání zemědělských aktérů.

**Klíčová slova:** sociální kapitál, zemědělství, sociální změna, sociální struktura, sociální jednání

## INTRODUCTION

It has become a tradition that the journal *Agricultural Economics* provides its pages also for sociologically oriented papers dealing with the issues related to the Czech

agriculture and countryside. There are usually two sociological numbers of this journal in a year, and one of them in 2002 published a paper titled “Can social capital help Czech agriculture” (Chloupková, Bjørnskov 2002). This paper will be labelled as “referred paper” in follow-

ing text. It is because Chloupková's and Bjornskov's ideas challenged us to continue the discussion over the issue of social capital. The reason why to prolong this debate in the journal *Agricultural Economics* was that the concept of social capital addressed in referred paper and backed by selection of recent literature in this field includes, in our opinion, only one-way dimension in considering this phenomenon. For instance, it almost omits other different possible definitions and other dimensions used in the work with the concept of social capital. It is done in the situation when social capital becomes the term which is used almost as a fashionable formula (e.g. Plan SAPARD 2000) and often it is used in heterogeneous way.

The paper presented here wants to highlight sociological understanding of the concept of social capital, to apply this concept to social class of farmers and to actors in the social change of the 1990s in the Czech Republic. The paper will also apply findings from authors' sociological research. Such work might be viewed as a sort of reaction to referred paper both in theoretical and practical (empirical) dimension.

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

If social capital is, as Portes (in Shucksmith 2000) writes, a concept which becomes one of the most popular exports of sociological theory into everyday language, it is eligible to look at how this term is used. Often quoted authors like Putnam, Coleman or Giddens view social capital as something operating in the sphere of collective level of the community or locality (Shucksmith 2000). Such portraying of social phenomena, processes or circumstances can be tracked back to Durkheimian sociological tradition. It searches for the explanation of the action and order in the society through the influences of entities external ("supra-personal") to any individual. This understanding of social capital is also the background of referred paper – it is something "supra-personal" (having the status of something external to every individual and organising these individuals) and thus enabling better co-ordination of activities. It brings the order to the actions in the society. Social capital is primarily linked to the collective of the actors. Social capital is

the element enabling the co-ordination of our activities and therefore makes our action less transaction costly (Bělohradský 2002). In such a case, social capital is a structure of relations facilitating productive activities (Coleman), increases the efficiency of society through facilitating co-ordinated activities (Putnam) or contributes to the economic renewal and development (Giddens). Analysing these views, social capital is a social fact in Durkheim's terms because it becomes an effective guide and control of conduct only to the extent that it is internalised in the consciousness of individuals, while continuing to exist independently on individuals (Coser 1974).

It might sound like a heresy from a sociologist to say that the life of the society is not located only in the sphere of collectivity, as coined by methodological collectivism, but it also concerns the sphere of individuals as emphasised by methodological individualism. Sociology, when analysing the life of society, does not address only collective entities (like the whole society) but it focuses also on human social lives (Giddens 1989). Therefore, it is necessary to work with the concept of social capital also in the sphere of an individual. If remaining only in the sphere of the collectivity, social capital is something what endures over the time, while the particular individual dies.<sup>1</sup>

For better understanding of social capital, it is therefore necessary to work with this concept both in the sphere of collective and individual. This is an approach used by P. Bourdieu in his conceptualisation of the reproduction of social classes. Social capital in this reproduction means the form of assets/wealth, which includes also social relations, friendships or acquaintances useful in the sense of increasing the prosperousness (successfulness) of a person who disposes with such assets. Social capital together with economic capital (i.e. tangible assets and wealth) and cultural capital (i.e. diplomas, education, mastering the activities) compose the total volume of capital. The scope (size) of this total capital distinguishes the individuals within the social classes. Internal composition, so-called configuration of capital, is the criterion for differentiating the fractions inside the social classes (Bourdieu 1979)<sup>2</sup>.

If considering the importance of communicational skills in modern society, which is based on functional relations (Hebermas in Možný 1991), there is not surprising close

<sup>1</sup> In such a case, however, it is not possible to say, that social capital in the Czech Republic before 1989 was destroyed or was weak as the referred paper states.

<sup>2</sup> The term human capital (or human potential) as defined in the economics (e.g. by Becker 1994) – is viewed as the resource of knowledge and skills embedded in people of the certain state, who are living in certain territory; it is the outcome of traditions, education or the knowledge acquired through practical activities (Velký sociologický slovník 1996). The term human capital does not belong into the group of terms of economic, capital, cultural capital and social capital which are used by P. Bourdieu. Human capital considers education as an investment into labour force measured through the categories of time and money. Education is the bridging element, which connects cultural capital having a strong symbolic dimension (expresses the dominancy) with human capital, which misses this dimension. Similar parallel might be drawn between social capital in P. Bourdieu's terms (and in the terms of others who develop his concept, albeit sometimes in critical way – Corcuff 2000) and social capital as used in referred paper (quoted Putnam 1993). The symbolic dimension – prestige (influence, power) related to retaining the contacts with influential people – is even more significant for social capital. This dimension of social capital is missing in referred paper.

connection of cultural and social capital (social capital continues and prolongs cultural capital). It is because the source of cultural capital is the capacity to acquire and to work with information. The source of social capital is the capacity to create social networks. It requires understanding of their design and using this knowledge (and another information) for person's own benefit (Možný 1991). We emphasise again, that both forms of capital (cultural and social in Bourdieu's term) aim mostly to symbolic benefit – to retain or to achieve position among established, dominating people in certain society. In other words, the issue is to have the power.

Another Bourdieu's term "habitus" refers to the connection of social structure (social position) with an individual actor (individual dispositions) in the social game. It is the game, which concerns the domination, i.e. the achievement of privileged position defined through the volume of the total capital. The collectivist concepts, due to their nature, work with the issue of power with great difficulties. The issue of power clearly emerges only when we work with individuals (in their positions with their habitus in social game about the dominance). Bourdieu addresses the great role of socialisation and high interiorisation of social position and given rules of the game in various social fields. It means that he shows the actors under great influence of social environment and the unification of the habitus. He accentuates power relations between dominating and dominated actors. In both types of Bourdieu's emphasising, it is possible to follow his structuralist approach and certain inclination toward the conflictualism. These two issues also open the space for criticising his ideas: in some social fields, there are the relations of co-operation (friendship, love, empathy) important as well as the competitive relations; habitus does not have such uniting characterisation for the actors because the sources of our experiences are various, therefore the actorship also includes varying habitus and therefore is not uniting the action of actors as Bourdieu might suggest. Analysing this criticism of Bourdieu's ideas concerning social capital indicates that acquiring social capital is not done only through the game of competing actors, and the dispositions of the actors participating in this game are not so similar each other as Bourdieu thought.

## DUAL CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

The Czech (or generally speaking post-communist) situation is useful to show why it is important to work with the concept of social capital in the duality interconnecting collective and individual spheres. One of the central thoughts of referred paper is the attempt to cope with the fact that there is destroyed or weak social capital in the Czech Republic. That is why the referred paper thinks about how to support the development of social capital and shows its role in the sphere of collectivity (e.g. farmers co-operative credit associations). These thoughts and suggestions work with understating of social capi-

tal bound only to the collectivity and to co-ordination of the actions of individuals enabling better efficiency, trust and easier human actions in general (less transaction costs). The action is necessary to be co-ordinated through social capital in this understanding only in a free society. In the societies where there are total plans and where exists the dictated administration of everything, the co-ordination is achieved through other ways – social capital in the sphere of equal relations of people (equities) in the understanding of such authors like Putnam or Coleman is substituted by the co-ordination of activities based on the relations of subordination (hierarchy). Therefore, it is so difficult to answer probably banal question, if there was or was not the social capital in such collectivised society as the Czech one had been before 1989. This question is probably difficult to answer using one-way understanding of social capital, because it is not possible to explain the lack of social capital in the sphere of collective only from the point of view of this collective sphere.

However, an application of Bourdieu's approach which combines the individuality and the collectivity into their mutual duality helps to solve the problems with outlined difficult explanation. It is because his concept brings us to an individual as well as to the social field (a collectivity inhabited by these individuals). M. Shucksmith (2000: 213) writes that economic capital, social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital are both the objects and the means of the people in their struggle over their positions. "The power of the dominant class succeeds in defining, through 'symbolic violence', what counts as legitimate knowledge, what social relations are valuable, and what symbols confer prestige and social honour."

Social capital therefore does not concern only the co-ordination of the activities of various people. This issue is the matter of fact of a collectivity composed of individuals (such as locality, community) and we work in this context with equities (we introduce this term as a semantic opposition to hierarchies) referring to free and equal people entering the area of exchange. Bourdieu's understanding of social capital accentuates also the issue of power. Social capital is bound to the power and to the struggle over the power. It is not the area of equities and collectivity (individuals are similar, "equal"). It is the sphere of the hierarchies and individuals (an individual dominates over the collective, equalities disappear and the inequalities emerge, therefore the power is more obvious here). The relation of an individual and the collective is, however, a dual relation. It is not an ideally opposite relation. One cannot operate in both spheres in the same scope but it also does not mean that one can operate only in the sphere of collectivity or only in the sphere of individuality. Hierarchies and equities are mutually interconnected, although it is possible that sometimes one overlaps the other. They are the hierarchies (related to power) and individuals (related to freedom), which, in their duality, enable to focus on the issues of social capital before 1989, as it was done in the Czech context by I. Možný (1991).

## APPLICATION TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

To document what this paper is dealing with, to outline the two faces of social capital – (i) in the sphere of collectivity and equities when social capital enables the coordination of activities of equal individuals (the equality of individuals is primary, and something “supra-personal” from the sphere of collectivity guarantees the order of human action), and (ii) in the sphere of individuals and hierarchies when social capital enables functioning and structuration of collectivity (collectivity is primary but the individuals in certain hierarchical position /i.e. with power/ guarantee the order on the level of collectivity) – we will refer to the findings from our research work. Within two research projects (Processes of Re-birth /Přerodové procesy) – grant of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic No. 403/97/0971; and Effective Integration of the Czech Agrarian Sector in the Frames of European Structures – Condition of Sustainable Development/ Efektivní integrace českého agrárního sektoru v rámci evropských struktur – předpoklad udržitelného rozvoje/ funded by the Czech Ministry of Education, grant No. CEZ: J03/98:411100013), the authors of this paper had the chance to investigate the changes in the social life of two large-scale farms located in a small town in the Znojmo district (South Moravia). When investigating the social events, we worked with dual understanding of social capital (in the sphere of collectivity and equities it co-ordinates the activities of individuals, and in the sphere of individuality and hierarchies it secures the existence of the collectivity, e.g. of a farm type).

### **The game concerning social capital within (inside) and among (outside) farms**

Our work in the research projects quoted above addressed the changes inside investigated large-scale farms and also the changes of relations existing among these farms, changes of relations with their suppliers and markets (outside the farm). This differentiation copies the duality of social capital. When investigating the relations among (outside) various farms and firms participating the agri-food chain, we worked with such an understanding of social capital, which is stressed by the authors of referred paper (co-ordination of the activities in the sphere of originally equal individuals). The order of the relations among these entities entering the market (atomised individuals represented by farms and firms in the agri-food chain) was actually (if it was possible) arranged through trust and commonly shared norms. If there were such shared norms and trust, they facilitated action of the actors and efficiency of the entire system. However, inside the farms we found mostly such type of social capital, which was related to the hierarchies and power. The order of relations inside the farms was arranged through commands resulting from power positions. It also enabled people to master their activities under certain conditions (outlined below).

When existing in situations, in which the actors can operate with certain power (situations related to ideal hierarchies), the actors could implement the changes in the way to master them and to cope with them. It is because of the capital they possessed, incl. social capital as a mechanism creating hierarchies, as P. Bourdieu understands it. Such mastering and coping with the changes were possible to achieve only inside the farms. The people with power were able in these micro-worlds of social entities to enforce common harmony in viewing the world (this is what Bourdieu has in mind in his sentence about power as defining what is legitimate, correct, appropriate or acceptable). Inside investigated farms in the locality of our research (in the coop and join-stock company), the hierarchical structure (the fundament of social capital – i.e. established relations and social networks) seems to be a guarantee of controlled, managed change which we investigated in these farms since 1990 till 1999. This structure could play such a role if it is not significantly eroded or destroyed. Established relations and social networks inside the farms were continually exchanged, they continued the past and prolonged some of the former elements into the present. This situation made the changes clearer (lower anomie) and the changes appeared to be better manageable and controllable. The actors mastered their roles thanks to social capital related to individuals and hierarchies inside the farms.

The changes outside the investigated farms, which concerned their external relations (with suppliers and markets), differ from the changes inside the farms. They were the relations with external world (co-operative relations – equities, social capital related to supra-personal collectivity). They were not as easily manageable and controllable as the relations inside the farms (co-habitual relations – hierarchies, social capital related to individuals). Instead of hierarchies (inside the farm), there are much more obvious and evident the equities (among the farms and firms, relations outside the businesses), which are forming these relations. Therefore, they were the relations of economic partners (or competitors) on the market. Within the sphere external to the farms, there also exist rather masked relations of political competition, expressing the interests of various social categories of farmers and non-farmers. If thinking about the relations transcending the relations inside the farms, the actors from the coop or the shareholders farm in investigated locality entered into the contact with other concrete actors from other concrete social entities. Many concrete people with their interests and faces therefore entered the field of the game, which was external to the investigated farms. It was the game with or against other concrete farms or firms (concretely sugar beet refineries, slaughter houses, markets for the farm products, dairies, companies marketing inputs for agriculture, etc.). In the changes, which crossed the border of both farms (e.g. the relations with trading partners), the scene is inhabited by many subjects. There was not any mutual control existing among these free subjects immediately after 1989 change. After the demise of communism, it was very dif-

difficult to control or to manage these external relations either through hierarchical power as it was done (and the subjects were used to do it) in the communist era, or through equity co-ordination as it is done in democratic market society (which had only started to emerge). Each of the subjects freely pursued its own interests. We face equal partners but their relations lack social capital in the sphere of collectivity (in the sense of norms and trust) necessary for the co-ordination of activities.

Our investigation documents that the arrangement of the relation between the farmers and food processors after 1989 was guided by the efforts to control (e.g. to have the power and to govern the new forms of establishing the hierarchies which were supposed to replace those destroyed after 1989) in all agri-food chain<sup>3</sup>. But there were also the efforts to set up such type of social capital in the sphere of collectivity, which helps through generally shared norms or trust to co-ordinate the activities of individuals. Both strategies of acquiring and retaining social capital in Bourdieu's dual understanding were implemented. Acquiring the control and the power related to such control enables to legitimise through the power what the entity with the power sees as correct or appropriate. However, there were also the efforts to co-ordinate the activities on the basis of trust, norms and newly established social networks. In this sense, we might introduce together with norm and trust the category of enforced mutual solidarity as a part of social capital. This kind of solidarity we found among the actors who knew each other (in personal relations) in the locality they operate but in fact they should be the competitors. Such kinds of relations emerged in order to co-ordinate the activities of these local actors in their contacts with other unknown (in the sense of personal relations) actors (mostly food-processors) and also in order to mutually support each other and to benefit from the provided support (e.g. through exchange of the services for farming which was beneficial due to the specialization of the farm). Such action guided by the strategy we call "conflicted solidarity" that emerged from the situation of unclear rules of the game and was supported by the "referee who does not implement his functions". Institutions making the milieu clearer were created only in slow and gradual way and often in very spontaneous way. Social capital used in this game originated from existing social capital generated in the locality and expanded into newly established social networks. Such social capital included both its sides (as the label of the conflicted solidarity strategy presented above suggests) – bindingness to the collectivity (farms, equi-

ty, co-operation) and the individuals (farms representatives, hierarchies, power).

Because the processes, events and relations among the actors participating in agri-food chain were not in the moment of the beginning of macro-social changes after 1989 under strong control of any of the elements of the chain (of any actor) and also because before 1989 it was not necessary to organize these issues on the basis of co-ordination done through the social capital in Putnam's sense, the situation observed indicated that the changes of the co-operative relations were chaotic and implemented with problems.

Farmers (and also some food processors) often lacked the trust among trading partners, including the institutionalisation of such trust in correctly negotiated, agreed, monitored and enforced contracts. In this sense, it is possible to speak about non-existence or about the lack of social capital. But it concerns only the sphere of equities transcending the borders of power hierarchies, crossing over the borders of the farms or firms. If the trust is crucial part of whatever social cohesion (Falk, Kilpatrick 2000), and contract relations are the basis of whatever transaction among the partners (Mlčoch 1996), than the non-existence of both institutions (institutions understood as the rules of game in North /1994/ sense) resulted into the situation when the farms faced the problems. Experienced social situations were eroded. The overall unclear social situation in the localities was framed into the criticism of the state for being inactive in creating appropriate environment for business relations among the actors. However, in this criticism the businesses own contribution to this unclear situation was not mentioned (the firms or farms "misused" this unclear situation to benefit in the detriment of the others).

The issues missed and criticised by the farmers in external relations (lack of trust and wrong contracts) are framed in the addressed question of power (control) in the agri-food chain, which is related to the dominating worldviews. The appropriateness of the work with dual understanding of social capital according to Bourdieu is again confirmed. This concept includes both the coordination of activities in the collectivities and the positions of individuals with the power backed by their social capital through which they are able to organize the social events. The power, which enables to control social events and situations, was transferred after 1989 from the hands of nomenclature monopolists (and their hierarchies related to the state) into the sphere of concrete economic actors. The readiness to handle and to use

<sup>3</sup> Detailed description of this struggle concerning the farms and food processors operating in investigated locality was outlined by M. Lošťák (1998) in the publication *Filipov I*. His paper describes the system of contracting farming which is inconspicuously developed in the relations between local farms and the sugar beet refinery located outside the place of the farms operation. The coop joined with the joint-stock company farm and with two other large-scale farms operating in the vicinity of investigated area against the refinery (the refinery is controlled by the foreign capital). The reason for this co-operation was to protect the farms against prices dictated by the refinery. The mentioned paper, however, due to the time of its publication does not trace other steps in the development of this struggle. They concerned the "clash" over the governance of the transport in the chain relating farms and the refinery. Analysing the entire case, it is evident that the farms after all had to adjust themselves (and they also had to learn) to the rules of the game dictated by the subject located not in the place of their operation (rules dictated by the refinery).

such “disembedded” power differed among various actors but surely it was higher among the food processors than among the farmers. Moreover, the farmers were rid of the possibility of the restitutions of the facilities established by them before the collectivisation in the form of crediting, purchasing, processing, supplying and other cooperatives (for more details about this readiness to govern agri-food chain in the moment when its supervision by the state after 1989 was over see Hudečková, Lošťák 1997).

**The game concerning social capital of agricultural actors – representatives of social classes**

This case concerns the comparison of social positions of farmers in the hierarchical structure of modern soci-

ety, which was not influenced by collectivisation of socialist type, with the sub-groups of farmers in the Czech post-socialist society. The starting point for the following ideas is the scheme of social space (Figure 1) according to P. Bourdieu’s La Distinction (1979).

The farmers in France are represented by middle and small-scale farmers (Kayser 1990). The elite among these farmers are those who are specialised, with modern equipment and integrated into the market. These middle farmers control the production but they are controlled by the input and output sectors in the agri-food chain. They protect their position through continual intensification. Non-specialised farmers are poorer but they better react to the dictate of the market through the diversification of activities. They are typical farmers of the yeomen type (part-type farmers with activities in crafts) who represent the locality. Small-scale farmers occupy the positions in

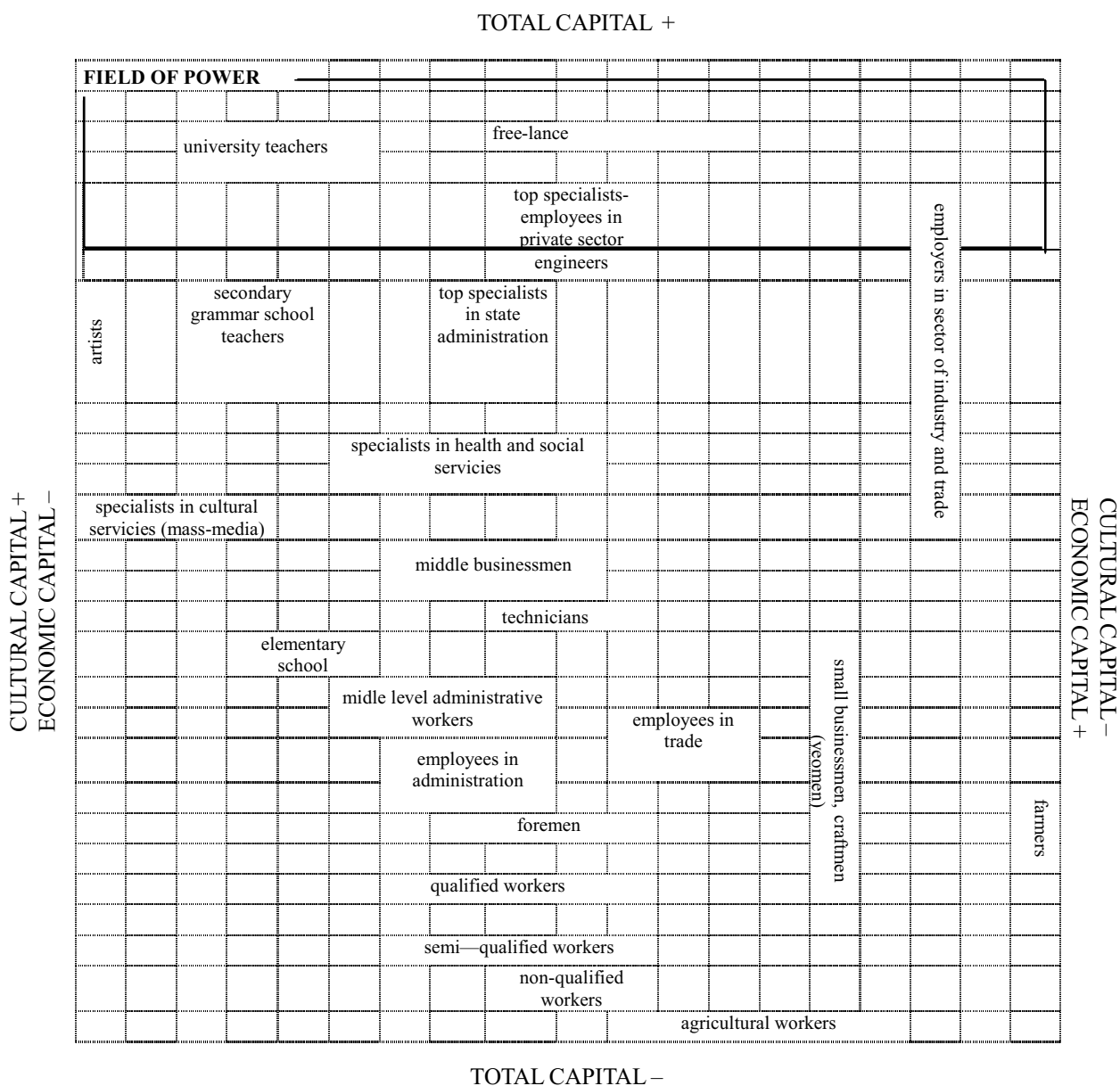


Figure 1. Scheme of social space

the lower class and majority of their incomes comes from the sources outside the agriculture (“pluriactive farming”). Associating in the professional organizations, co-operatives and unions is typical for middle and small-scale farmers. This type of associating together with their networks is based on networks of relatives and forms their social capital.

The higher position in the French agriculture is occupied by the capitalists (sometime called also the “middle urban bourgeoisie”). They are the people involved in the management of agricultural production, of labour and of trade in the farms with employees. These are the farms where land capital plays insignificant role and they are often the agricultural businesses owned by the foreign firms (Blanc 1987). These people have the highest economic power (among all farmers) and their relatively strong social capital is embedded in the political organizations (enabling better access to credits, land or other goods). Their position is similar to that of employees in industry or trade.

On the other hand, low position is occupied by French agricultural hired workers. It is a group without the sources to increase their very low capital. On the other hand, there is a small group of agricultural employees-specialists (about 2% out of all group of hired labour in the French agriculture). They have a relatively strong cultural capital originating in special technical education. They might be incorporated into the group of technicians.

Generally speaking, the social position of the classical French farmers (middle and small-scale farmers who represent the majority of farms as for their number and area of land they farm) is low (i.e. it is on the edge of middle and lower class) in such a way that to increase their positions presumes to accumulate all three parts of capital (economic, social and cultural) in the same time. The accumulation of only one part of general capital cannot have an effect on remarkable increase of the total volume of capital.<sup>4</sup>

Long-term comparative research, which would correspond with above outlined French model (scheme) and would enable to structure the Czech farmers into present-ed groups, is not available for the Czech Republic. Existing statistical data (data on the structure of agriculture as for the types of businesses, professional and educational structure of farmers, development of incomes in agriculture) enable only to outline certain hypothetical ideas.

The structure of farms in the Czech Republic does not differ too much from the French model as for the proportion of the number of family and capitalist businesses (it is about 9 : 1).<sup>5</sup> This ratio is, however, contrary, if considering the area of farmed land. In the Czech Republic, the family farms operate less than 10% of land, while in France the ratio indicated above (9 : 1) does not change.

The special group in the Czech Republic, which we included into the capitalist businesses, are the agricultural farming cooperatives. Many of them are now undergoing so-called “second transformation” (or better speaking privatisation, because many of them change their form into joint-stock companies). This type of agricultural coops is almost unknown in the West European model of agriculture. What differs is the fact of great separation of labour in the coops from capital ownership (land owners do not often work in the coop) and from the decision making power in the Czech coops. It weakens the total capital and efficiency of co-operatives, which results in lowering their chances to be successful in the market in the competition with agricultural business (trading) companies of limited liability or joint-stock company type.

There is a large group of employees in agriculture as for their number in the Czech Republic. Many of them are also landowners but they do not employ themselves on their land. The structure of this group is very different comparing to the category of hired labour existing in the West European model (or better speaking in analysed the French model). The Czech employees in agriculture are often skilled workers, technicians and administrative workers.

We might hypothetically say:

- The employees in the Czech agriculture have, compared to the West European model (model represented by French agriculture), a higher social position, which is backed mostly by their higher cultural capital. However, today they experience their position as declining and low because this social group was the loser of social changes starting in 1989 (the evidence of this trend is the development of wages in agriculture which is unfavourable compared to the industry and national economy in general, and also the data from sociological investigations). Their social capital is low. Their social capital is limited only to associating in trade unions, which, however, are not strong enough to protect their interests.
- There is a small group of employees-specialists (leading managers of farms they are employed in) with high

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<sup>4</sup> Muller (Muller 1987) and other authors point out a particular group of actors in the agriculture – so-called different farmers (*différents*). Because of their great variability, it is difficult to incorporate them into the scheme presented in this text. They are also labelled as rural yeomen (*exploitants ruraux*). They are typified by one common feature – original strategies with the goal to minimize the costs and external dependency, to valorise the endogenous resources, to exclude the specialisation, to diversify and to increase the incomes through processing, direct sale and services providing to others. These farmers create new models of farming with important elements of their own reproduction. They possess a relatively high cultural capital and they are eager to be incorporated into the social networks of “classical farmers”. This want is due to their innovations very difficult and they are not very successful in the sense to become the members of the “classical farmers” networks. However, they are aware of the necessity to increase their social capital.

<sup>5</sup> We are aware of simplification when we consider family farms as the operations up to 100 ha, operated by family members who are working on their own and hired land under the conditions that majority of capital and decision-making comes from family sources.

cultural capital and also with strong social capital. They are often the persons who had occupied similar (high) positions in the period before 1990s and they master to convert their former political capital (it was a type of social capital in the communist countries) into their contemporary social capital.

- Family farmers as a group restored in the social change of the 1990s are weak as for their economic and social capital, albeit many of them possess high cultural capital. Therefore, their restoration as for the volume of total capital is very problematic. Their consciousness of the collective or of collective action is not sufficient to successfully compete with large-scale businesses. They miss mastering the collective action to achieve their own goals and benefits (they do not dispose of the appropriate social capital).
- Agricultural capitalists (farm owners employing labour and operating more than 100 ha of land, often up to 1 000 ha, persons who restituted or privatised large agricultural properties) will probably represent a greater part in the structure of the Czech agriculture compared to the West European model. However, their position will not be as crystallised as in the case of their western counterparts. Nevertheless, also within this group there exists a smaller group of those with relatively high economic, cultural and social capital. They concern two types of persons: (i) they are either the persons who used their previous high cultural and social capital to acquire economic capital, and reconverted former social capital which existed in the form of political capital (from the period before 1990s) – it concerns a part of those who privatised agricultural properties; (ii) or persons with high cultural capital who acquired economic capital through restitution, however, their weakness is insufficient social capitals – it concerns a part of those who restituted agricultural property.

The last mentioned group of “privatisers” confirms the existence of strong social capital, which through various re-converting continues to exist after 1989. It is that aspect of dual understanding of social capital, which is related to an individual and power in hierarchy. On the other hand, it is the reason why many agriculturists from other groups (employees-workers, employees-specialists, family farmers or the owners of smaller farms of non-family type) do not consider the social changes in the agriculture as trustworthy. They consider this change as unjustified because former political capital was transformed into contemporary social capital of certain representatives of farming. This situation is not only the case of agriculture. The trust of farmers in social change therefore disappeared. In this sense, we might (in the sense of the referred paper) state that social capital in the social change of the 1990s was destroyed (but not before the change). We again confirm the need to use the concept of dual understanding of social capital in its application towards analysing the development of the Czech agriculture before 1989, in the change of 1990s and after this change.

## CONCLUSIONS

This text is a reaction to the paper of J. Chloupková and C. Bjørnskov “Could social capital help Czech agriculture?” published in *Agricultural Economics* No. 6 in 2002. The text points out the problems emerging from simplifying addressed issues if only one-way understanding of social capital is used. If social capital operating with such partial phenomena as trust or norms in the structure is bound only to collectivity and to the conditions of equal positions of individuals (equities) who coordinate (which the help of social capital) their activities (in our case the activities in the area of Czech agriculture), such concept cannot explain all issues and sometimes might be even misleading.

To minimize these problems, the authors of this paper assume that the same importance as is given to social capital in understanding of previous paragraph should be given also to such understanding of social capital, which is bound to individuals (individuality). The individuals are, however, the bearers of hierarchically arranged positions in social field. These positions enable them, if they are high enough, to dominate in the game concerning the new face of the Czech agriculture.

If empirical study of social capital starts from the dual concept of social capital that is coined by P. Bourdieu (i.e. both in the sphere of collectivity and equities, and in the sphere of individuality and hierarchies), it is difficult to say, that “social capital of post-socialist countries is therefore weak” (it is the background of the referred paper we discuss with). Empirical investigation of the social change in the Czech agriculture brings evidences that social capital was destroyed or eroded before the beginning of the change and therefore it was weak (it concerned only social capital in the sphere of collectivity). But it was also present and was successfully converted into economic capital during this change or it continues and was used to build up new social networks (it concerned social capital in the sphere of individuality). If considering social capital in the sphere of collectivity (assuming the equality of individuals in the field of game), we should also point out that the decline (or destruction) of social capital was not only the issue before the change of 1990s but it was also its outcome.

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